

A MESSAGE FROM

As Chief Justice of the Illinois Supreme Court, it is my privilege to present the 2002 Annual Report of the Illinois Courts. This Report summarizes the major Supreme Court projects initiated during the calendar year, reviews the work of the Illinois Judicial Conference and the Court's several committees, and provides a general overview of the funding and operations of the judicial system. The Report also contains a brief introduction to the various divisions of the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts.

Essential to the efficient operation of Illinois' judicial system is a properly functioning administrative component. The Administrative Office, which functions as an arm of the Supreme Court, is charged with implementation of the Court's several projects and initiatives. Under the leadership of Cynthia Y. Cobbs, the Administrative Office provides technical and administrative support, training, and other court services to all three levels of Illinois courts and serves as liaison to the Court's various committees. The divisions of the Administrative Office, which are described herein, include the Executive Office, Administrative Services, Court Services, Judicial Education, Judicial Management Information Services and Probation Services.

The year 2002 was a progressive and innovative time for Illinois Courts. One of the most important undertakings in the past year was developing policy for electronic access and filing of Circuit Court records. The Court approved the *Electronic Access Policy for Circuit Court Records of the Illinois Courts* and *Policy for Implementation of an Electronic Filing Pilot Project in Illinois' Courts*, effective January 1, 2003. The Court's progressive actions are consistent with its ongoing interest in the use of emerging technologies to enhance the Illinois court system. These policies will provide for the orderly development of practices and procedures for electronic receipt and maintenance of case files, and also for the dissemination of case information in a way that mutually benefits the public and the judiciary.

Also during 2002, the Supreme Court acted to ensure adequate funding for lawyer assistance programs by increasing license fees for attorneys. The additional fees will be used to support and sustain a program, in existence for over 20 years, that provides assistance to attorneys fighting all forms of substance abuse, and provides referrals for attorneys suffering from mental health or other emotional problems. The lawyers assistance program operates through an extensive system of volunteer attorneys and judges. New funding from the increased attorney license fees will supplement money received through donations and other sources to defray organizational and administrative expenses.

The Supreme Court also addressed concerns of decreased funds available to the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois. Under Illinois Rule of Professional Conduct 1.15 regarding Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts (IOLTA), attorneys holding nominal and/or short-term client funds are required to place those funds in a pooled interest-bearing trust account. The interest on these pooled client trust accounts is paid to the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois, a tax-exempt, not-for-profit organization that uses the interest generated by IOLTA accounts to make charitable contributions to not-for-profit agencies that provide legal aid to the poor. However, with the recent economic downturn and plunging interest rates, the IOLTA funds available to the Lawyers Trust Fund have been significantly diminished in the past years.

Accordingly, the Supreme Court adopted amendments to the Supreme Court Rules which provide for additional funding to support the Lawyers Trust Fund. Supreme Court Rule 756 was amended to provide that, out of the full annual registration fee of \$229 collected from Illinois attorneys, the Attorney

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Registration and Disciplinary Commission is to remit \$42 to the Lawyers Trust Fund. Supreme Court Rule 751 was amended to provide that the Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission has the duty to collect and remit to the Lawyers Trust Fund the fee described in Rule 756 and to file with the Supreme Court an accounting of the monies received and expended for fees remitted to the Lawyers Trust Fund.

On January 29, 2002 the Supreme Court formed a special committee to study child custody, termination of parental rights, and adoption issues. Among other issues, the Committee will focus on formulating methods to reduce the time it takes to bring child custody and adoption cases to trial and to expedite the appeal process. The Committee held two public hearings in 2002 and plans to hold additional hearings in 2003.

On November 12, 2001, the Supreme Court established a Special Supreme Court Committee on Professionalism. As part of its charge, the Committee is to recommend to the Court ways to promote respectful conduct, as the norm, within the legal profession. Since its inception, the Committee has established sub-committees on Education, Mentoring and Internships, Town Meetings and Symposia, Rules and Enforcement & Aspiration, and Professionalism programs within the Illinois law schools.

For 2003, the Court has authorized the Committee to begin orientation programs in all Illinois law schools. As part of these programs, representatives of the Supreme Court of Illinois will administer professional oaths to incoming first year law students, and senior attorneys will facilitate discussions among law students on professionalism within the legal community. These programs will begin in August of 2003. The Committee has received strong support from the Deans of the nine Illinois law schools.

Additionally, the Committee on Professionalism's sub-committee on Town Meetings and Symposia, in cooperation with the Illinois State Bar Association, is scheduling eleven meetings throughout the State of Illinois starting in July of 2003. The specific purposes of these meetings would be to raise the consciousness of the bench and bar about professionalism, to foster discussion and exchange of ideas on professionalism topics, and to develop recommendations to enhance legal professionalism in Illinois.

The Court remained dedicated to providing comprehensive judicial education resources in 2002. Not only did Illinois judges from across the state access the Court's 2002 Seminar Series conducted throughout the year, but more than 800 judges attended the 2002 Education Conference in February and March. Both the Seminar Series and the Education Conference, covering a wide range of civil and criminal law topics, judicial ethics, evidentiary issues, juvenile justice, family law and other areas of law, were planned and overseen by the Illinois Judicial Conference Committee on Education. In addition to these comprehensive judicial education resources, the Court also presented, under the auspices of the Committee on Capital Cases, two seminars on conducting death penalty cases in 2002. These seminars were attended by the more than 230 Illinois judges who may be called upon to hear death penalty cases, pursuant to Supreme Court Rule. Advanced capital litigation seminars will be presented in 2003-2004 to further support judges hearing capital cases.

The Court also presented, through the Committee on Education, a week-long New Judge Seminar, designed to assist all new judges in the critical transition from attorney to jurist. New judges also

received individual support and supervision through the mentoring program for new judges, overseen through the Court's Judicial Mentor Committee. The Court will continue to provide critical ongoing judicial education opportunities in 2003 through the annual Seminar Series as well as the second Advanced Judicial Academy, which is an intensive five-day seminar intended to assist experienced jurists in honing their skills and increasing their knowledge of evidentiary issues. In 2003, planning will also begin for the Education Conference 2004.

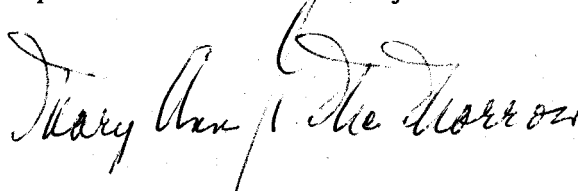
Consistent with provisions of the Probation and Probation Officers Act, the Court continued to direct resources toward new initiatives to improve the effectiveness of probation services in Illinois, and to expand accountability measures for offenders under probation supervision. These initiatives include the implementation of research-based offender assessment and intervention models to promote more positive case outcomes. These improved probation practices are aimed at enhancing public safety by reducing recidivism for offenders sentenced to probation.

The Court's ongoing development of web technology in 2002 further enhanced the efficiency of the entire Illinois court system. The Court's web site, introduced in 2000, is continually updated and improved to provide more information on the judicial branch and additional links to numerous legal resources and organizations. Moreover, the expansion of web-based technology also improves data exchanges between all three levels of the Illinois Courts and other state agencies and local law enforcement offices. Also, the Court's procurement of internet-based legal research through LEXIS and WEST LAW, as an additional research alternative to current online research service, has improved efficiency for staff in the reviewing courts.

Technology initiatives projected during 2003 include the continued installation of digital recording systems. For 2002, there are 140 circuit court courtrooms equipped with central control or stand alone digital recording capabilities. An electronic filing pilot project is expected to proceed as well as continued review of the Court's public access to court data policy. Work is expected to continue on the Integrated Justice project coordinated by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority to develop and maintain information and communications systems for law enforcement and public safety agencies in Illinois. Finally JMIS plans to leverage the Internet and Internet technologies to improve information exchange. The Illinois Court's web site (www.state.il.us/court) will continually be improved to provide information to the legal and educational communities as well as the general public.

The implementation of digital electronic recordation in the circuit courts grew at an astounding rate in 2002. New digital systems were installed in Bureau, Monroe, Adams, Macon, Vermilion, Will, Rock Island and St. Clair counties. An additional 29 counties have submitted requests for digital recordation systems. The expansion of digital recording continues to bring the Court closer to its goal of providing a record in every courtroom, thereby enhancing the entire Illinois court system.

I invite you to review the work of the Illinois Courts and the Administrative Office as contained in this Annual Report. Finally, I would like to extend my appreciation to the Administrative Office, committee members, and to all of those who have assisted with the numerous projects and initiatives featured herein. I am confident that these ongoing efforts will continue to improve the administration of justice in Illinois.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Mary Ann G. McMorrow".

Mary Ann G. McMorrow
Chief Justice